

Social Recruiting: Insights and best practice from 2011



Introduction

At Viadeo we aim to provide you with the latest insights, trends and thinking in professional social networking and recruiting. This article is part of a series of comment pieces, best practice and how-to-guides to help you better understand this evolving landscape.

Social Recruiting: insights and best practice from 2011

There has been much discussion taking place for some time about the use of social media in recruitment, these discussions now seem to be reaching fever pitch. From building talent pools and communities, interacting with potential employees, finding effective ways to engage with the 'passive' candidate, to the new set of challenges that social media presents to HR & recruitment professionals - it's safe to say that there are some massive changes going on in the recruitment industry.

We've been quite busy in the last month, hosting a series of Social Recruiting Roundtable discussions in London and Paris in order to get a practical understanding of the current issues facing HR and recruitment professionals, and to gather some opinions on the impact of social media today and in the future. We conducted a survey across our network in France about the way in which recruiters use social media and received over 340 responses from senior HR professionals. Additionally, we sponsored the Social Recruiting Conference, #SRCONF, in Paris, which brought together HR and recruitment industry professionals to discuss and practically demonstrate the opportunities that social recruiting presents.

HR Directors, Managers, Consultants, Recruiters and Marketing professionals from SME's to blue chip companies discussed and debated themes such as; the barriers and challenges recruiters face in using social media; how social media is currently being incorporated into the recruitment process; the critical success factors for using social media channels; the current limitations of social media when used in recruitment, and how social recruitment should evolve to meet the demands of recruiters and talent managers. What we found through all these activities were some common themes which highlighted some of the challenges facing recruiters today. Some of these include the following...

Dedicated time and resource

Investment in social media is most definitely not a short term commitment. That said, it is important to appropriately allocate people, resource and tools to ensure that you can manage the communications and applications from candidates. Given the instant nature of communications on social media, there is an expectation of employers 'always being online and responsive.' This expectation needs to be managed and processes put in place to ensure timely responses are provided to avoid any backlash

from disgruntled applicants. Time needs to be invested to understand how your potential candidates are using social media and then resources allocated to develop strategies, plan and manage each channel.

Well-honed social media skills

The use of social media within the recruitment mix now requires HR professionals and recruiters to diversify their skill sets and develop technical competence on profiling candidates, launching targeted campaigns and engaging in dialogue with candidates. This is made difficult by the need to master the communication tools on different social media platforms. Indeed, according to our survey of HR professionals in France, 31% of respondents identified lack of knowledge of social media as one of the major barriers to its use in the recruitment process. Marketers are more accustomed to using social media tools as they are increasingly a core part of their marketing mix – according to a recent statistic 91% of European companies say social media is becoming more important to their overall marketing strategy¹. Social media allows a more targeted approach in terms of tailored communications, and so follows a need to develop well-crafted and considered messages that are in tune with the audience. This is no easy skill and may necessitate involvement from marketing and or communications professionals. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is the need to develop skills to measure and compare the effectiveness of each social media channel to justify current and future investment.

Blurring the lines

Is social media an internal communications tool? A marketing tool? An employer branding tool? A recruiting tool? In fact, social media facilitates all of the above. Interestingly, what social media has done is give recruitment professionals and marketers an opportunity to work together and blur the lines between what is a 'marketing' function and a 'recruitment' function. Social media also allows us to have a 'one-on-one' as well as 'one-to-many' conversations and use ever increasingly detailed information about candidates to initiate an emotive and direct conversation. Coupled with this is the growing concern about the use and potential misuse of personal data and the importance of allowing people to decide how their personal information is used.

¹ Source: Useful Social Media, February 2011

Competitive edge

Companies of all sizes are demonstrating some caution and tentative behaviour when it comes to investing in social media to support their recruitment process. In our survey 24% of respondents cited the fact that lack of control of the recruitment process when using social media is a major barrier to its use. This concern stems from the fact that candidates can freely and publically express their dissatisfaction towards a potential employer based on their application experience or overall regard for their brand. The counter argument is that not investing in social media leaves an organisation in the dark by not understanding the positioning of their employer brand, effectively managing perceptions and leaving the competition to forge ahead and reach out to new candidates that would otherwise be difficult to access. Andy Headworth from Sirona Consulting says, 'the employer brand has become an essential part of the social recruiting space, because as the market has turned around to become a candidate driven one again, they (the talent) have the choice, and they are not afraid to make it. Candidate expectations are going to change the way companies will have to interact with them.'

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What's apparent is that companies need to start somewhere, but it's not as easy as building a page or establishing a presence on social media channels and expecting people to follow; successful social recruiting requires a strategy, a tactical plan, resource and management. So what are some of the things you should be doing to better understand and leverage social media? We've got some tips to help you get started, read on...

Top tips in social recruiting

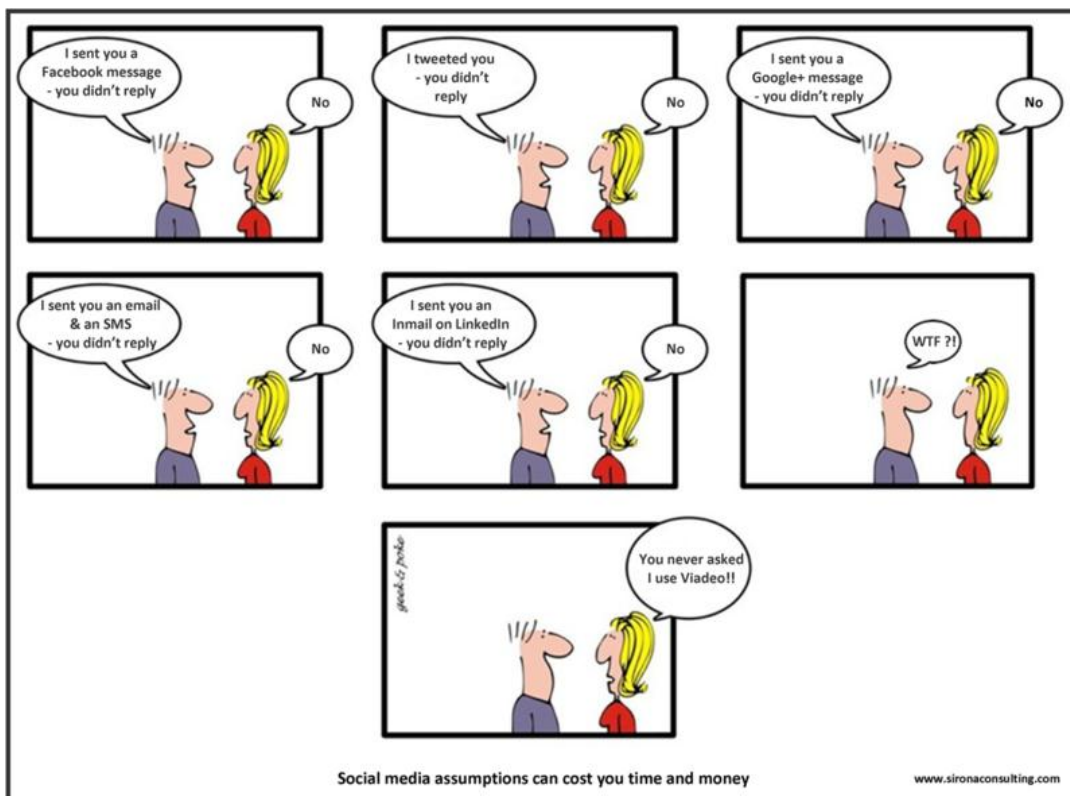
Set some objectives

Diving into social media with no objectives and no strategy in place is risky. The key is to have a clear idea of why you want to use social media, what platforms you wish to use and how you will measure the outcome of using each one. Failing to do so means you risk damaging your employer brand and have limited or no results at all. Align your social media strategy and HR plan in order to establish

clearly defined goals which can be quantified and evaluated to understand the benefit of investment. Once you have a well-defined social recruitment strategy allocate resources, get the right people involved, be responsive and willing to experiment; use tools such as Hootsuite or Tweetdeck to manage multiple social networks and have a 360 degree view of your social media activity.

Know your audience

Do you know the profiles of employees you are trying to recruit and the relevant keywords describing their skills? Have you looked at the individual social networks to ascertain whether the audience you are trying to reach is actually on these networks and how they use these networks? Are your potential candidates using the network for personal or professional use? As Andy Headworth points out, following the roundtable discussion in London, 'the first myth that was dispelled during our discussion was the concept of social media/social recruiting being free. While the platforms may be 'free' the planning, time and resource is certainly most not free. Many people make the mistake of assuming that the target audience they want to reach are on the main social networks. Not necessarily. Take the time to research where your target audience is and look further than the main social networks. Only when you know where they are can you create a strategy to best attract, source and engage with them.'



Created by Sirona Consulting

Content is king

Content can take many forms in recruitment, ranging from job adverts to employee interviews, successful candidate recommendations, white papers, videos, articles, news and blogs. This content can then be featured on your company's career website or externally on a company page, company forum, blog or on a social network. Wherever this content is found, the main objective should be to attract, create awareness and interest, instil an understanding of the employer brand and the job opportunity available, and then ultimately convert that visitor into a candidate. Without engagement, conversion becomes extremely difficult and building an effective community virtually impossible.

It is important to ensure your employees, in particular those you have recently hired, are part of your community or page on the social network. Profiling current employees through video or case studies will start to give you a platform to build a content strategy and give potential candidates an insight into what working for your company will be like. As social media allows candidates to strike up a direct conversation with a potential employer, content is one dimension but comment, discussion and dialogue around it is multi-dimensional.

Find out who your social media advocates are

The best people to engage with social media are those that are passionate about it and are already using it appropriately and effectively. Look inside your organisation and find out who they are. It might be someone in your marketing or PR team or within your media agency. Spend a day or two with them to get a better idea about how they engage in social media and the tools and tactics they use. But remember to avoid empowering the first social media enthusiast you find as they may not be aligned with your social media plan!

Think 'long term'

The time taken to find your target audience will reap dividends in terms of the future talent you secure for your organisation. Ensuring potential candidates are engaged with your company before you begin advertising for roles is a valuable way of easing the conversion process from candidate to potential employee. Social media allows you to engage with candidates at an early stage of their career, in particular, the new generation of graduates that consider social media to be the default method of communication. Social media can also be used to facilitate face-to-face discussions and allow the development of an online to offline relationship.

Create a positive experience

Everyone is a potential candidate as well as a potential customer so make sure you listen and respond appropriately. Follow the lead of companies that spend as much effort exiting their employees as they do attracting them, providing a positive employee experience that will foster recommendation and championing your brand to other candidates. Remember that a bad experience with your recruitment process, for example not replying to applications, means that the person will very likely be reluctant to try applying again or worse, not recommend your company to their colleagues. A good example of this is Sodexo who use an effective approach known as 'boomerang hiring' which is the practice of sourcing old employees back in to the organisation to recruit for new roles.

The opportunities for HR professionals and recruiters who engage in social media far outweigh the associated risks. Growing your networks, having conversations with a responsive audience, transparency and building on your talent pool, are some of the areas that social media facilitates. Successful recruitment hasn't changed, but the social tools and technologies available to recruitment professionals are evolving at an unprecedented pace and the impact of this is yet to be determined.

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What do you think?

If you have any questions, feedback or suggestions for future articles, you can get in touch by emailing hring@viadeo.com

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With thanks to...

Andy Headworth - Sirona Consulting helps and advises companies on recruitment strategy and social recruiting.

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